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## THE DECORATOR AND FURNISHER.



### TECHNICAL HINTS ON FRENCH TAPESTRY PAINTING.

THE increasing demand for painted tapestries, and the growing appreciation in this country of their great value for permanent artistic decoration, is leading our best architects to seek the aid of efficient workers in this beautiful art in carrying out the completion of their work, both for public and private dwellings. This will doubtless inspire many

artists of ability to take up a branch of art that is in every way worthy of skillful talent. A few practical hints on the subject will be sufficient to put those who are accustomed to the use of the brush in the way of properly manipulating tapestry dyes. I therefore take it for granted that any readers who purpose to turn my suggestions to account have a knowledge of drawing, a trained eye for color and a due regard for the relative values of light and shade embracing the all important question of tone.

A proper perception of tone is as a rule the great stumbling block of the amateur, and the want of it stamps his work at once as the production of a tyro in his art.

Tapestry painting is not difficult by any means, at the same time it is absurd to suppose that those who have had little or no artistic training will find it easy, and attempts on their part to achieve any really serious work, will only lead to failure and disappointment. Inferior work tends to bring tapestry painting into disrepute with those who do not know of what it is really capable. The first thing to be considered is the choice of materials and to obtain these of the proper kind is all important. Most stores for art materials of any standing sell now what are designated as tapestry colors, but it by no means follows that these are the permanent dyes that alone can stand the test of time by means of fixing through the agency of steam. Even imported colors are not always the genuine dyes. However, nothing is easier than to test them in the following manner: Take a spare piece of canvas, mix with each color a little of the medium sold for the purpose, and scrub the colors well into the canvas side by side, then take this trial piece to a good dyer's and request them to subject it to the action of steam for about two hours. If the dyes are indelible, as they should be, they will, if



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anything, increase in brilliancy; if, on the other hand, they are not dyes at all, they will run, change color, and in some instances almost disappear, so that if used without first ascertaining their worth, the result would be disastrous to a finished picture if subjected to the action of steam.

Care must be taken also to paint only on canvas made entirely of wool or silk prepared for the purpose, as the dyes cannot be properly fixed on linen or cotton. Wool canvas is made either coarse or fine, to suit all descriptions of work. For curtains, large portières, or wall panels of any considerable size, the coarse rib is most suitable, but for smaller work, such as a frieze, door panels or screens, the finest make is desirable.

Brushes of a particular kind are required; they are of very stiff hog hair, they should be flat and rather finer at the edge than the base. Several assorted sizes are brought into requisition and the very smallest obtainable are indispensable for the delicate markings of the features, hands and feet. If the brush used for these be too large the color cannot be properly controlled, and will spread beyond the intended limits, whereby all expression is lost.

In addition to canvas, colors and brushes, provide yourself with some soft white rag, a pounce bag, some No. 2 Conté chalk, and a steel pricker, also a few little glass pots for mixing color in, and last but not least, a glass palette, the larger the better, somewhere about 16 x 22 is a useful size. The palette should be of plate glass, painted white on the reverse side. A table is a useful addition, made to fit the palette, with divisions around for holding colors, brushes, etc., etc. Always use a mahl stick when painting, to avoid soiling the canvas or rubbing the outline.

The choice of a subject must depend greatly on the position it is destined to occupy. It is well before commencing a work of any importance to ascertain the light in which it will be eventually placed, the height it is to be fixed, and whether it is to be viewed by the spectator quite close or at some distance. Large figures and a very bold design would be completely out of place in a cramped space, and it would be wasted labor to indulge in elaborate detail if the painting is to be seen from a distance, therefore no work of any importance should be begun without a careful inspection of its intended future surroundings.

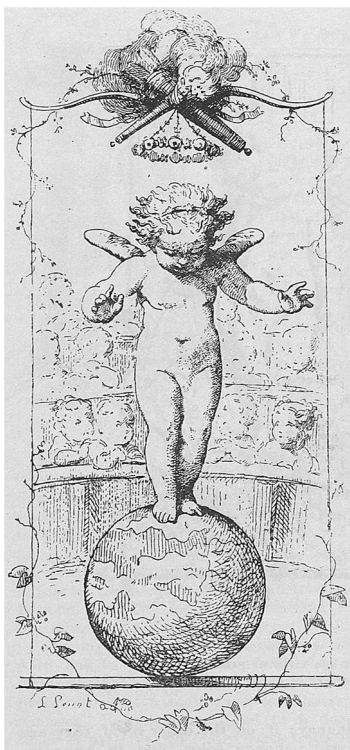
It is by no means necessary nor is it advisable to adhere slavishly to the style and types of the old woven tapestries; indeed such imitations would not altogether meet modern requirements, at the same time the soft, mysterious blending of colors so peculiar to tapestries should never be lost sight of, and is easy of attainment, inasmuch as the dyes lend themselves readily to lovely soft combinations of color, especially when applied to wool canvas.

A beautiful quality of wool canvas is made fifty-four inches wide, the coarse made runs from eighty-four to one hundred and twenty-two inches, so that very large panels can be executed



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without any seam. It is not difficult to meet with suitable subjects in great variety. We have a choice from the best works of many noted artists; just a group from some large picture can frequently be adapted. If rich coloring is needed then Oriental subjects are very fitting; on the other hand, if delicate coloring be chosen, the works of Boucher and Watteau at once suggest themselves, those of Boucher perhaps being preferable.

Landscapes, with deer or cattle in the foreground, are very pleasing for painted tapestries, and take less time than figure subjects.

The list of colors is the next thing to come under consideration, as generally tabulated it is cut up into about thirty-six tints. Here let me remark that if makers could be induced to condense this list and turn out about a third of that number of colors of sufficient strength, they would be all that could be desired, as from them any available tint could be derived by mixing and diluting with mediums, adding water also if a very pale shade is required. However, we can scarcely hope for this reduction in number, seeing that it would seriously affect the profits to be made on the sale of these colors, so we must do the best we can by selecting judiciously from the list those that are most capable of being utilized for any kind of work. I should say then choose to commence with, gold yellow, turquoise blue, indigo, cobalt blue, springtime green, emerald green, brown red, burnt sienna, raw sienna, raw umber, cassel earth, pink madder, vermillion, neutral tint and flesh tint. Medium sold for use with the dyes must at all times be added when painting, to hold the dyes, until the work being completed, they are ready to be fixed.

Having armed yourself with all necessities and chosen a fitting subject, enlarge it by scale if working from too small a copy.

Draw with great care and precision a correct outline of figures or animals, as the case may be. Do this on manilla paper. Spare no pains to make a good drawing to begin with, as the painting, however good in execution, will be comparatively worthless if the draughtsmanship is faulty. When satisfied with your outline prick it carefully with the steel pricker, held directly at right angles with the design. It will be best to place under the design a thick cloth evenly spread.

For long, straight lines, in the folds of a dress for instance, a wheel, serrated at the edge, may be used to save time, but never apply this to the delicate parts of the drawing, as in small curves you cannot ensure the necessary accuracy. For the features, hands and feet let the pricked holes be very fine and close together. This method will preserve the drawing to the best advantage and save much trouble in the end. Now pin the design in proper position on the canvas, previously stretched in a wooden frame made for the purpose, and carefully pounce it by rubbing the pounce bag firmly over the pricked holes. Do not on any account dab it, or the line beneath will be blurred. This done, gently remove the pricked paper, and if dexterously managed, a perfectly clear dotted outline will appear on the canvas; if too dark lightly blow off the superfluous powder. Very finely powdered charcoal, tied up loosely in a coarse rag, makes a good pounce bag.

When stretching the canvas take great pains to keep the rib even. It is perhaps best that it should run across the design, but this is not imperative.

Space compels me to conclude my remarks for the present, but with the Editor's kind permission they shall be continued in the next issue, when we will discuss the best means of applying the dyes to the canvas, with a view to producing a pleasing and desirable result.



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